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A dissertation

on Amenorrhoea

by

the Author

Lewis McJiggitts of Virg

passed Mar. 26. 1818

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Amenorrhoea

By the term amenorrhoea is meant the absence of the menses, as will, readily, be perceived from its etymological import. This disease has been divided into retention or emanesis menseium of Latin writers, and suppression. By the first term is understood, that the menses have not appeared at that period of life, at which it is natural, they should. By the last or second term, suppression, is meant, the secreted fluid has been discharged, but is now interrupted. The menses not appearing, at the usual period, should not induce us to conclude there is disease; particularly, if there be no constitutional symptoms indicative of disorder in some part: but when menstruation does not occur at the common time, and there are attending ~~it~~ symptoms of general debility, a sense of lassitude, and dyspeptic symptoms, with preternatural appetites for chalk, lime and other indigestible substances, it behooves us to look for the causes and corresponding remedies. These causes have been supposed to be a want of vigour or debility in the system preventing a new action from taking place, and impairing those which exist. I believe, the obstruction is not owing to the immediate effect of debility of the uterine vessels; but that it arises from the general debility of the system not allowing that action of the ovaries, to take place which is requisite to produce that monthly, healthy, secretory

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action of the uterus, denominated menstruation, which always takes place at that period of life, when the ovaries are completely developed and perfected, which occur at different periods in different climates. That the ovaria do exert their influence in menstruation, I infer from the several reports, which we have, of women never menstruating, and being found, on dissection, to be void of these organs. One case published by Charles Pears, in the Philosophical Transactions for 1805. This woman died, at the age of twenty nine. She had never menstruated. She ceased to grow at the age of ten years. Doctr. Chapman related a similar case which came under his observation, while in Europe. The woman, of whom he spoke, had a peculiar aversion to the sight of man. From these two facts, and many others, which might be adduced, I am led to conclude, that the retention of the menses is, generally, a symptomatic disease, always, for the most part, depending on the state of the ovaries. Deficiency, or an imperfect developement, of the uterus, must, also, be acknowledged, to be a cause of the menses not flowing; as it is the organ, whose function is the secretion of the menstrual flux. That this is a secretion must be admitted, from the glandular structure of the uterus, and from the appearances of the fluid, differing in colour, odour, and coagulability from blood: it is deprived of the fibrin of the blood

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and sums, therefore, to be a fluid sui generis.* We observe from the preceding facts, that the uterus is, completely, under the dominion of the ovaria; which are the prime movers in the process of menstruation. It was said by an ancient writer, Vanhelmont: Propter solum uterum mulier est, id quod est; the uterus alone makes woman what she is. Although this viscus appears, in some cases, to act, on the female system, very powerfully; nevertheless, I am inclined to believe, it is not the action of the uterus, but the operation of the ovaria; for we see in extra uterine pregnancy, the decidua formed, the breasts enlarged and, in fact, all the symptoms, which indicate a natural conception. From this, and subsequent facts, I am induced to dissent from Vanhelmont's motto, and to say: Propter sola ovaria mulier est, id quod est; it is owing to the ovaries alone, that woman is, that, which she is. To this inference I am drawn, from having read of instances, where the uterus was wanting, without producing any change in the general appearance of the woman, more than the want of the menses. Doct.r James, in his valuable lectures, related a case of a lady, in this City, who was married; she, not being endowed with the faculty of propagation, consulted him, and Dr. Physick. They, on examination, found the uterus wanting. From this account, and from one similar, in Richerand's Physiology, quoted by him from the memoirs of the Medical Society of

* See Doct.r Chapman's Richerand.

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Paris, and promulgated, originally by Professor Cailliot, we perceive, at once, that those women had every thing, which is characteristick of their sex. That this may appear more obvious, I will adduce the case. "A female was born, and grew up with all the external characteristics of her sex. At the age of puberty, she wished to yield to her desires, but found it impracticable; there was nothing beyond the vulva in other respects, well formed. A small canal, between two and three lines in diameter, occupied the place of the vagina, and terminated in a cul de sac, and was about an inch in depth. The most accurate examinations, in the proper manner, could discover no uterus". In these two cases, we see love, in its most prominent feature, which has, and very justly, been said to be the whole history of woman. Retention of the menses is, generally, attended with heaviness, listlessness to motion, fatigue on the least exercise, palpitations at the heart, pains in the back, loins, and hips, flatulency and acidities in the stomach and bowels, costiveness, a preternatural appetite for chalk, lime, and various other absorbents, together with many dyspeptic symptoms, usually attending chlorosis.

As the disease advances in its progress, the face becomes pale, and, afterwards, assumes a yellowish hue, even verging upon green, from which it has been called green sickness; the lips lose their colour, the eyes are encircled

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with a livid areola; the whole body has a leucophlegmatic appearance, with every indication of a want of power and energy in the constitution; the feet are affected with oedematous swellings; the breathing is much hurried by any vigorous exertion of the body; the pulse is quick but small: and the person is apt to be affected with cough and many of the symptoms of hysteria. Sometimes a great quantity of pale urine is discharged in the morning, and not unfrequently, hectic fever attends.

The cure of this disease, from the view I have taken of it, appears rather difficult: but whenever we find it originating from debility, acting through the instrumentality of the ovaries, we should endeavour to restore the tone of the system. This seems best done, by invigorating diet, the moderate use of wine; by gentle exercise on horseback in the country; by associating with agreeable company, so as to keep the attention engaged and the mind tranquil, and amused: of all company that of gentlemen is in my opinion by far the most beneficial, and should always be recommended as it not only engages the attention of the patient, and tranquilizes and amuses her mind; but at the same time, by the association of ideas, determines nervous influence and consequently an afflux of blood to the genital organs, and, by that means, calls into action the dormant ovaries, and causes them to extend their influence

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by sympathy, to the uterus. A regular course of different Tonics will be found highly useful such as the Peruvian bark, the infusion of gentian or quassia, together with chalybiates; of which the Carbonate of Iron is generally prefered. Previous to a use of these medicines it appears correct to administer an emetic, for the purpose of cleansing the stomach, and preparing it for the operation of those medicines. The hot salt water bath has been thought very beneficial, succeeded by frictions with dry flannel, or a soft brush. The cold bath has been supposed to be injurious, as it sometimes produces chills; on the account of this, it has been superseded by the warm. that the warm bath is useful, I have no reason to doubt, but at the same time I am disposed to believe, that the cold ought not to be entirely laid aside, in all states of this disease; particularly where the system has the power of reaction, and can produce a glow. in this state of the system, I should imagine the cold bath would be found one among our best remedies. Those things, which act more immediately on the uterine system, are the exercise of walking, jumping and dancing; this seems best, as it is at the same accompanied with other amusements. Frequent friction pudeliviem, and semicupium, have often good effect; compressing the iliac artery has, also, been recommended

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The electric spark, passed through the pelvis, has been used, for the purpose of raising the indolent uterus; which I imagine to be owing to the want of ovarian influence. In all cases matrimony should be advised as it is productive of the most natural remedy.
Stimulating the rectum by purgatives has been advised. Those most frequently employed are Aloes, gamboge, and scammony; the first of these is best, as it acts on the rectum principally and through the medium of sympathy on the uterus. Dr. Hamilton recommended very highly purgatives in this disease, referring most of the symptoms attending on it, to the state of the alimentary canal. Some practitioners are in the habit of prescribing these stimulating purgatives, twice a week; but it appears most proper to employ them, in small doses, just sufficient to keep up the alvine evacuations regularly. Other stimulants, under the name of emmenagogues, such as Savin, Hellebore &c, have been employed in the cure of retention; but those remedies, which I have mentioned, are by far the best emmenagogues, in this disease. If all of these should fail, mercury appears to be the only source of relief; as we may then conclude, that the ovaries, or uterus is in some way disordered, or scirrhous.
Suppression of the menses is not, always, to be considered a disease; as in the commencement of the menstrual

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secretion, the periods are not uniformly regular: it, also, is, naturally, produced by pregnancy; which is, readily, recognised by its effects. This obstruction of the catamenia is produced, by some, and most of the causes, that are efficient in retention. It may, and, frequently, is produced by whatever debilitates the system in general; and by such causes, likewise, as operate more directly on the uterine system; as for instance, frequent abortion laborious parturition, or excess in venery, may bring on suppression of the menstrual discharge. Suppression of the menses is, also, suddenly, occasioned by certain other causes; as cold and passions of the mind during menstruation. This disease, when thus induced is productive of bad effects; and owing to these effects injuring the health or to the uterus not speedily recovering itself from this affection, the suppression may continue a considerable time. The immediate, and remote effects are very much modified by the state of the different organs; as regards their liability to disease.
If the patient be predisposed to Phthisis Pulmonalis she will be very apt to be affected with it; or if to any other, the result will be the same. Baillie has observed, that bathing young girls, and elderly women when the menses are irregular or obstructed, the spleen swells and subsides again, when the catamenia become regular

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It, also, happens, in consequence of suppression of the menses, that hemorrhage takes place from the nose lungs, stomach, kidneys, hemorrhoidal vessels, fingers, eyes, ulcers, and from warts; these discharges, occasionally, appear at monthly periods; but more frequently they occur irregularly. When suppression continues a long time, we may conclude, that the ovaries or uterus is in some way disordered accordingly, we find on dissection some one of these organs scirrhous. As this disease is frequently symptomatic of some chronic complaint, such as consumption, or dropsy; it would be superfluous and highly injurious to resort to stimulating medicines to restore the flow of the menses. But in those cases originating from debility, or produced by cold, fear or some other removable cause, it is proper that we should attempt a cure: and in our curative plan we should always bear in mind the state of the system.

When suppression arises from debility, it is to be treated, as retention from the same cause with tonics, invigorating diet, exercise, and sociable company with the addition of those medicines, that are called emmenagogues; such as savin, Hellebore, Ergot. This last medicine is not used with much advantage

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The tincture of cantharides has been found beneficial in this complaint, where the uterus was in a state of atony, by Doctr. Chapman in doses of ten drops, morning, noon, and night; gradually increased to the quantity of two or three drachms a day. He employed, under similar circumstances, the spirit of turpentine with some advantage. In one case of this disease, the same Professor administered the phosphorus; the system being in a torpid state. He gave the tenth of a grain intimately mingled with olive oil. This medicine was soon interrupted by the prejudices of the patient: but even in this small dose, it was productive of a universal glow and excitement. The Senka+ has been used in this complaint, originally by Doctr. Hartshorne of this city, and introduced to the notice of the medical world, by Dr. Chapman, in a paper on this subject inserted in the Eclectic Repertory for October, 1811. The mode of preparing, is to take of the singed bruised an ounce and of boiling water a pint; to be suffered to simmer over the fire, until the quantity is reduced one third; to prevent nausea, a little orange peel should be added. Four ounces

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of this decoction should be given during the day. It is to be administered just about the time when the menstrual effort is expected to be made, and should be omitted during the interval. The tincture of hellebore has been employed, in suppression, by Doctr. Physick, from whose authority, there can be none higher. About the time the menstrual effort is about to be made, Burns advises an emetic to be exhibited, and the warm bath to be used, or semicupium or pediluvium. Tourniquets have, about this time, been applied to the thighs, but without much effect. Blisters applied to the region of the uterus; (either the sacrum, or the upper parts of the thighs, will answer) are found highly useful. Electricity, passed through the pelvis, is occasionally, of advantage.

When suppression is produced by the application of cold, or any other cause, that suddenly interrupts the discharge, there is, generally, considerable febrile action; marked, by a frequent pulse, irregular pains in the chest, headache, hot skin, flushed face &c: here stimulating emmenagogues are evidently injurious; and I believe the principal reason, why the different medicines

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denominated emmenagogues, have so often been at one time celebrated, and at another reprobated, is the want of that attention to the state of system in which they were found beneficial.

In this state of the system there cannot be held out a more obvious signal for the aid of blood-letting, and the other antiphlogistic remedies, than is here exhibited by the powers of nature.

After blood-letting has been premised, the saline purgatives should be employed; which may be succeeded by the mild diaphoretics, such as the saline mixture or antimonial powders.

An Essay
on
Immortality
by
J. H. Fox

Commenced March 20. 1819